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ABSTRACT

Designed as a criterion-referenced scale to describe levels of writing skill development for basic essay elements, this instrument provides separate six-point rating scales for general impression of the quality of an essay, general competence, coherence, paragraph organization, support for main ideas, and mechanics. Validity, reliability and normative data are included. (This document is one of those reviewed in The Research Instruments Project (TRIP) monograph "Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts, Volume 2," published by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. The TRIP review, included here as an introduction to the instrument, describes the instrument's category (writing), title, author, date, age range (intermediate through postsecondary and adult), purpose, and physical characteristics.) (HTH)

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Scale for Evaluating Expository Writing (SEEW)

The measurement instruments contained in this document have been reviewed in a monograph (cited below) edited by William T. Fagan, Charles Cooper, and Julie Jensen, for The Research Instruments Project (TRIP), and funded by a grant from the Trustees of the NCTE Research Foundation:

Measures for Research and Evaluation
in the
English Language Arts
Volume II

The purpose of the editors has been to select and review measurement instruments pertaining to all aspects of research and evaluation in the English language arts, e.g. language and language development, literacy, literature, reading (including comprehension, teacher-pupil interaction, etc.), writing, and teacher knowledge and attitudes. In order to make some of the actual instruments reviewed more readily available, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) has cooperated with the editors by processing selected instruments into the ERIC system (see the 42 documents assigned Clearinghouse accession numbers CS 207 904-945).

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Category: Writing

Title: Scale for Evaluating Expository Writing (SEEW)

Author: Edys Quellmalz, Center for the Study of Evaluation, University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

Age Range: Intermediate through Post-Secondary Adult

Description of Instrument:

Purpose: To evaluate and score expository writing.

Date of Construction: 1978-1982

Physical Description: SEEW provides separate six-point rating scales for general impression of the quality of an essay, general competence, coherence, paragraph organization, support for main ideas, and mechanics. The mechanics scale includes a brief guide for identifying certain errors in sentence construction, usage, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Designed as a criterion-referenced scale to describe levels of writing skill development for basic essay elements, SEEW defines score points 4-6 in terms of mastery or competence, score points 1-3 in terms of nonmastery.

As an example of one scale in SEEW, the complete scale for coherence is presented here:

SEEW: Essay Coherence

This subscale focuses on the flow of ideas throughout the entire paper and between paragraphs. The emphasis is on vertical relationships of ideas throughout the essay.

Essay coherence: The paper has a main idea (stated or clearly implied) which makes a point about the subject and is at a greater level of generality than the other points within the paper. Subtopics are logically related to the main idea and to each other.

MASTER

6 =
- The subject is identified
- The main idea is stated or implied in opening and/or closing statements
- Opening and closing statements must match or logically relate to the text and to each other
- The topic is limited through reference to key points or lines or reasoning
- The essay plan is logical
- The essay plan is clearly signalled by transitions
- The essay plan is consistently maintained (no digression or extraneous material)

5 =
- The subject is identified
- The main idea is stated or implied in opening and/or closing statements
- Opening and closing statements relate to or follow from the text and from each other
- The topic is partly limited by indicating number and type of key points
- Plan is logical
- Plan is signalled by appropriate transitions
- There may be digression or an elaboration

4 =
- The subject is identified
- The main idea is identified or implied
- There may or may not be an attempt to limit the topic, give directions to subsequent reasoning
- There may be a few minor digressions from the plan, but no major digressions
- Subtopics can be reshuffled

NON-MASTER

3 =
- Subject is clear
- Main point may <u>not be very clear</u>. There may be a major digression or several minor digressions
- A plan is attempted which may need to be inferred

2 =
- Subject is clear
- Main idea is not very clear and/or there may be more than one
- The plan is attempted, but not consistently or not completely carried out
- There are many digressions

1 =
- Subject is unclear
- Main idea is absent or very unclear
- No plan is attempted or followed

Validity, Reliability, and Normative Data:

SEEW is a composite of several current approaches to general impression and analytic scoring. Choices could be made among its six

scales to reflect instructional emphases in a school program. Reliability data come from controlled research and actual competency assessments in which several hundred raters have scored over 10,000 essays. After a careful training session, coefficients of reliability ranged from .89 to .91 on the subscales of each scale in SEEW. Rating time per essay averages 2.3 minutes for paragraph length compositions and 3.5 minutes for multiparagraph essays.

Order Information: ERRS (ED XXX XXX)

Related Documents:

Cooper, Charles R. Holistic evaluation of writing. In C. R. Cooper and L. Odell (Eds), Evaluating writing: describing measuring, judging. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1977. (ED140 020).

Mullis, I.A. Scoring direct writing assessments: What are the alternatives? Educational Measurement, 1984, 3, no. 1.

Expository Scale V

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ELEMENT 1

Impressionistic Rating Procedures

The purpose of Impressionistic Rating is to form a single impression of a piece of writing as to how well it communicates a whole message to the reader. Impressionistic scoring assumes that each characteristic that makes up an essay -- organization of ideas, content, mechanics and so on -- is related to all other characteristics. Impressionistic scoring further assumes that some qualities of an essay cannot easily be separated from each other. In short, the procedure views a piece of writing as a total work, the whole of which is greater than the sum of its parts.

Discerning readers naturally will attend to, or be influenced by, some essay characteristics more than others. In the Impressionistic scoring, however, readers should arrive at a judgment regarding the overall quality of the essay.

For this element, you are being asked to form an overall opinion concerning the effectiveness of the essays as examples of expository writing.

Some views on exposition are given below:

- Exposition is the kind of discourse that explains or clarifies a subject.
- Exposition seeks to explain or inform through such methods as giving reasons or examples, comparing and contrasting, defining, ennumerating or through a combination of methods.
- Exposition explaines why or how.
- Exposition promotes reader understanding of a subject.

General Impression

You are to read each essay through first, in order to form an overall impression of its quality. To assign the essay a score, consider the following question: To what extent does the essay achieve an expository purpose for the intended audience?

Assign each paper a mark of 1 - 6 using the scale below:

6 = An excellent example of exposition
5 = A good, adequate example of exposition
4 = An adequate example of exposition

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3 = A marginal example
2 = A poor example
1 = A very poor example or barely readable
Paper completely off topic or genre

Expository Scale ▼

ELEMENT 2

General Competence

Based on your first or second reading of the essay, decide how competently the writer formed the essay. Does the essay demonstrate mastery/command of just the basic essay elements listed below? If the student received no further writing instruction do you think he would produce other writing which communicates clearly and exhibits command of these elements?

1. Main idea
2. Essay organization
3. Paragraph organization
4. Support
5. Mechanics (usage, sentence construction, spelling, punctuation, capitalization)

Assign each paper a mark of 1 - 6 using the scale below:

MASTER

6 = Very competent	The paper executes all the elements competently. There are no serious errors. The paper has a clear main idea, logical organization, relevant, detailed support and a command of basic mechanics. There are no major flaws.
5 = Definitely competent	The paper is competent in all of the basic elements, but there may be a few minor flaws.
4 = Adequately competent	The paper is adequately competent in all elements. There may be a few flaws. Some may be serious.*

NON-MASTER

3 = Almost competent	The paper lacks competence in one or two elements, and there are several major flaws.
2 = Not very competent	The paper has two or more of the elements. There are many serious flaws.
1 = Not at all competent	Paper has none or only one of the elements competently executed.

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*If the essay is only one paragraph, paragraph cohesion is not considered a missing element, if the one existing paragraph coheres. If it clearly should have been divided into several paragaphs, then paragraph cohesion is a missing element.

Expository Scale V

ELEMENT 3

Essay Coherence

This subscale focuses on the flow of ideas throughout the entire paper and between paragraphs. The emphasis is on vertical relationships of ideas throughout the essay.

Essay coherence: The paper has a main idea (stated or clearly implied) which makes a point about the subject and is at a greater level of generality than the other points within the paper. Subtopics are logically related to the main idea and to each other.

MASTER

6 =
- The subject is identified
- The main idea is stated or implied in opening and/or closing statement
- Opening and closing statements must match or logically relate to the text and to each other
- The topic is limited through reference to key points or lines of reasoning
- The essay plan is logical
- The essay plan is clearly signalled by transitions
- The essay plan is consistently maintained (no digression or extraneous material)

5 =
- The subject is identified
- The main idea is stated or implied in opening and/or closing statements
- Opening and closing statements relate to or follow from the text and from each other
- The topic is partly limited by indicating number and type of key points
- Plan is logical
- Plan is signalled by appropriate transitions
- There may be digression or an elaboration

4 =
- The subject is identified
- The main idea is identified or implied
- There may or may not be an attempt to limit the topic, give directions to subsequent reasoning
- There may be a few minor digressions from the plan, but no major digressions
- Subtopics can be reshuffled

NON-MASTER

3 =
- Subject is clear
- Main point may <u>not be very clear</u>. There may be a major digression or several minor digressions
- A plan is attempted which may need to be inferred

2 =
- Subject is clear
- Main idea is not very clear and/or there may be more than one
- The plan is attempted, but not consistently or not completely carried out There are many digressions

1 =
- Subject is unclear
- Main idea is absent or very unclear
- No plan is attempted or followed

Expository Scale V

ELEMENT 4

Organization - Paragraph*

This subscale focuses on the relationship of ideas within paragraphs, their logical interrelationship and subordination to the paragraph topic.

Paragraphs present subtopics which are developed by cohesive groups of supporting statements. Each subtopic represents a complete unit of thought. Major units of thought are delineated by physical separation of paragraphs. Statements within the paragraph relate logically to each other and to the paragraph subtopic.

MASTER

6 = · All major units of thought are set off by distinct paragraphs
· The paragraph has a clearly stated or implied topic
· All sentences within paragraphs are related to each other, to the paragraph topic and are subordinate to it. There are no digressions or irrelevancies
· There are no one sentence paragraphs unless they are especially effective

5 = · Most major subtopics are developed in paragraphs
· Most paragraphs contain logically related subordinate support
· There may be a minor digression

4 = · Many subtopics are developed in discrete paragraphs with related subordinate support
· There may be some minor digressions

NON-MASTER

3 = · In some paragraphs statements are logically related, but may not function as support subordinate to the paragraph topic. Paragraph separation is evident and consistent. Some relationships between sentences must be inferred

2 = · There are few paragraphs where statements are logically related or supported. There are many digressions. Paragraph separation is inconsistent. Many relationships among sentences must be inferred

1 = · There are no paragraphs where statements logically cohere. Paragraph separation is incorrect

9 = · There is only 1 paragraph

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*For conventions for paragraph separation (e.g., physical separation or indenting) see Mechanics.

ELEMENT 5

Support

This subscale focuses on the quality (specificity and relationship) of the support provided vertically for the essay theme as well as horizontally within each paragraph.

Support statements are at a greater level of specificity than the generalizations they are intended to support. Support statements logically relate to each other and to the generalization. Support includes specific details such as examples, facts, anecdotes, reasons, concrete language.

MASTER

6 = • The essay main idea and all paragraph topics are supported by relevant, specific statements.

5 = • The essay main idea and almost all paragraph generalizations/assertions are supported by predominently specific statements. Enumerations are supported by descriptive detail, functions, or rationale

4 = • The essay main idea and most paragraph generalizations are supported. Most support is specific. Enumerations are supported by descriptive detail, functions or reasons

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NON-MASTER

3 = • Some or all generalizations are supported by logically related detail, or, some support is not specific but it is distinct and clear. Support may be primarily an unelaborated, undetailed, unsupported list

2 = • An attempt is made to support generalizations/assertions. Some supporting sentences do not logically follow from each other or are redundant.
• Support lacks precision, clarity in details and/or language

1 = • No support is provided, or,
• Support, if present, is vague, and confusing, or,
• Not logically related to generalizations, or,
• At the same level of generality as the topic it attempts to support

Expository Scale V

ELEMENT 6

Mechanics (Usage, sentence construction, spelling, punctuation, capitalization)

MASTER

6 = · There are few or no errors. There are no serious errors.

5 = · There may be a few minor errors in the categories, but no more than one serious error.

4 = · There are some errors. A few may be serious.

NON-MASTER

3 = · There are numerous errors in the categories. There are some serious errors in several categories. Below mastery in sentence construction.

2 = · There are many serious errors, causing some confusion.

1 = · Errors are so numerous and serious that they interfere with communication.

Check those mechanical skills below master level.*

_____Usage. Does not display command of standard vocabulary usage.

_____Sentence construction. Does not display command of basic sentence structure.

_____Spelling. Misspells many common words (includes homonyms).

_____Capitalizations and punctuation. Does not use standard conventions appropriately, e.g., periods, commas, capitals, apostrophes.

_____Conventions of paragraph separation are incorrect or inconsistent (indenting, spacing, titles, numbers).

1) Sentence Construction

Serious errors:
- Subject verb agreement
- Run on
- Fragments

2) Usage

Serious errors:
- Homonyms, e.g., it, it's, their, there; to, two, too
- Incorrect use of common words
- Incorrect pronoun reference

Minor errors:
- awkward or odd use of words, phrases, but meaning still clear
- vague, abstract language

3) Spelling

Serious errors:
- Common words misspelled; does not include homonyms. Any misspelled word only counts as one error, even if the misspelling repeats

Minor errors:
- Unusual, less frequent words

4) Punctuation/Capitalization
- Initial caps--common proper nouns
- Periods at end of sentence, common abbreviation
- Commas (in series, for opening phrases)
- Contractions

5) Paragraph Conventions

Serious errors:
- Title
- Number
- Inconsistency of separation convention
- Absence of only convention for separation

Minor errors:
- Use of spacing instead of indentation (as in business letters)

Competence	Focus/Organization	Support	Mechanics
6 Excellent (all)	• subject clear • main idea clear • key points, reasoning at beginning or end • beginning and end relate • plan logical • plan signaled by transitions • paragraphs set off all major ideas • no one sentence paragraphs • no digressions	• main idea and all major topics elaborated by more specific details • enumerations supported by detail, functions, rationale	• one or two minor errors • no gross errors
5 Good (most)	• subject clear • main idea clear • topic partly limited by reference to number or type of key reasons • logical plan • some transitions • most major ideas in paragraphs • minor digression	• almost all major points elaborated by more specific detail, elaboration • most elaboration is specific	• a few minor errors • may be one gross error • usage and mechanics still not a problem
4 Adequate (many)	• subject clear • main idea clear • topic may be limited • plan logical, but sub topic can be reshuffled • many major thoughts in paragraphs • few minor digressions, no major	• many major points supported • much elaboration is specific	• a few common errors • one or two gross plu no more than one mi • total
3 Developing (some)	• subject clear • main idea not very clear • plan attempted, must infer • some logically developed paragraphs • some major digressions or excessive elaboration	some major points developed by elaborative detail and reasons • some elaboration is specific but is distinct and clear • may be a list	• some errors interfer • some gross and minor • sentence constructio below mastery
2 Rudimentary (few)	• subject clear • main idea not very clear or more than one plan attempted • few paragraphs logically developed • many digressions	• supportive detail attempted • may be redundant • may not be precise or clear	• many gross and minor • some confusion
1 Off topic Off genre (almost none)	• subject may be unclear • main idea unclear • plan unclear • almost no logically developed paragraphs	• little or no support or • support is confusing or at the same level of generality as the main assertion	• difficult to read • many gross varied • very confusing

Expository Scale V

The rationale for this hybrid holistic/analytic scale derives from writing assessment research conducted by the Center for the Study of Education (CSE) (Winters, 1978; Quellmalz, 1981; Quellmalz, Capell & Chou, 1982). This research suggests that global quality judgments and analytic ratings of the same essay differ and therefore result in disagreement as to whether the writer is characterized as master of non-master. Our interest in analytic rating also reflects our belief that if assessment is to inform instructional decision making it must provide diagnostic feedback to students, parents, teachers, and program personnel.

Description of Subscales

The holistic judgment for the General Impression scale assumes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and asks for a rating of the quality with which the writer engages the topic to achieve the intended purpose for the intended audience. Raters may include subjective reactions to freshness of ideas, originality, and style in this judgment.

In contrast, the holistic judgment for the General Competence scale asks for a rating of total essay quality in terms of command of a specified set of basic elements: essay-level coherence (main ideas and organization); paragraph organization, support and mechanics (sentence construction, usage, spelling, punctuation, capitalization). These elements were specified because they recur in both rhetorical theory and writing pedagogy as important essay components; they also represent priorities in many writing compency assessments. The individual subscales on each essay component

present specific criteria to judge the writer's skill in using these essay elements.

Potential Adaptation of the Scale for Varied Assessment Contexts and Purposes

CSE has a continuing research interest in the relationship among different rating approaches to evaluating the same essay. Information provided by the holistic and anlaytic subscales represent one contrast of interest; we are also examining the subscales' individual and combined sensitivity to writing skill development.

Research Questions Related to Scale Elements

In particular, CSE has included subscales on Expository Scale V which are designed to answer several research questions.

1. What rating criteria make a difference in how student writing competence is described? Are essays written by good or poor writiers consistently good or poor on all essay elements? Does analytic scoring provide a differential profile of writing skill strengths and weaknesses?

2. Do holistic scorings which differ in reference to qualitative essay elements (e.g., style, originality vs. coherence, support) result in different descriptions of student competence.

3. What essay scoring criteria differentiate among skill levels of developing writiers, e.g., are variations in command of paragraph coherence or mechanics more characteristic of the writing of younger or lower ability writers?

Since the subscales of Expository Scale V are designed to provide information on these questions, the scale is not presented as the definitive

expository scale; it incorporates, rather, multiple methods for scoring conventionally valued elements of expository essays.

Scale Development. The current version of Expository Scale V has been used in controlled research and actual assessments by hundreds of raters to score over 10,000 essays. At the end of a structured training session, generalizability coefficients indicating rater agreement on the subscales have ranged from .93 to .97; percentages of rater agreement after rating the 10,000 essays ranged from .89 to .91 on the subscales. When separate ratings were assigned to the four mechanics subskills, rating time averaged approximately 4 minutes for multiparagraph essays and 2.5 minutes for paragraph-length essays.

Relationship of Scale Elements to Curriculum

The subscales, with their accompanying operational criteria, were designed to represent instructional priorities of school systems. In an ideally integrated assessment and instructional system, criteria used to evaluate writing gathered for formal assessment should be the same as those used to evaluate and provide feedback to students on their class writing assignments. While individual classrooms might well focus on additional elements such as originality of content and style or voice, criteria used in judging formal assessment writing should reflect desired core writing elements. The CSE Expository Scale V includes the essay coherence, paragraph coherence, support and mechanics subscales as commonly valued basic writing elements.

Selection of individual elements on the rating scale may differ depending on the particular assessment purpose. For example, teachers might want separate ratings for focus (main idea) and organization rather than have a combined coherence score. Also, the elaborated mechanics elements of sentence

construction, usage, spelling, and punctuation/capitalization can provide useful classroom level diagnosis, particularly for younger or less proficient students whose writing displays diverse mechanical weaknesses. For large scale competency testing programs assessing older or more able students, however, a comprehensive mechanics score may suffice. Also, when paragraph-length writing samples are collected, the essay coherence subscale would not apply. Depending on the philosophy and interests of the assessment team approving rating criteria, only one of the holistic subscales, General Impression or General Competence, might be included.

The priorities and constraints of an applied assessment purpose will influence the specification of rating criteria. Expository Scale V can be employed or adapted for a particular assessment setting. When it is, we suggest pilot testing rating elements to examine empirically the sensitivity of subscales to variations within and between students' writing performance and to writing elements valued and taught in the instructional program.

More detailed technical data on the characteristics of the Expository Scale V can be requested from the CSE Writing Assessment Project, Dr. Edys Quellmalz, Project Director, UCLA Graduate School of Education, 145 Moore Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

Related References

Pitts, M. L. (1980). The relationship of classroom instructional characteristics and writing in the descriptive narrative mode. (Tech. Rep. No. 130). Los Angeles: University of California, Center for the Study of Evaluation.

Quellmalz, E. S. (1982). Report on Conejo Valley's winter 1982 writing assessment. Los Angeles: University of California, Center for the Study of Evaluation.

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